IN THE CLAIMS:

1.   A method for rendering a portal graphical user interface (GUI), comprising:

providing for the representation of a GUI desktop, a GUI look and feel, and a GUI book as a set of controls wherein the controls can be organized in a logical hierarchy;

traversing the representation, wherein the traversing comprises:

associating a theme with a first control in the set of controls;

rendering the first control according to the theme;

rendering any descendents of the first control according to the theme;

wherein any descendents of the first control can override the theme; and

wherein one of the set of controls can communicate with another of the set of controls.

2.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

the desktop is a view of a portal;

wherein the desktop can be represented by a desktop control; and

wherein the desktop control is hierarchically superior to the shell control and to the book control.

3.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

the look and feel determines the appearance of the portal;

wherein the look and feel can be represented by a look and feel control; and

wherein the theme is a variation of the look and feel.

4.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

the book can be used to navigate to at least one portal page; and

wherein the book is represented by a book control.

5.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

one of the set of controls can respond to an event raised by another of the set of controls.

6.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

a control can have an interchangeable persistence mechanism.

7.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

a control can have an interchangeable rendering mechanism.

8.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

accepting a request.

9.   The method of claim 8 wherein:

the request in a hypertext transfer protocol (HTTP) request.

10.   The method of claim 8 wherein:

the request originates from a Web browser.

11.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

generating a response.

12.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

a control can represent one of: button, text field, menu, table, window, window control, title bar, pop-up window, check-box button, radio button, window frame, desktop, shell, head, body, header, footer, book, page, layout, placeholder, portlet and toggle button.

13.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

associating the theme with the first control can occur when the first control is rendered.

14.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

the first control inherits the theme from a parent control.

15.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

the theme specifies the appearance and/or functioning of an control in the GUI.

16.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

rendering the first control according to the theme can be accomplished in parallel with rendering of other controls.

17.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

the theme can be specified in whole or in part by a properties file.

18.   The method of claim 17 wherein:

the properties file can include at least one of: 1) cascading style sheet; 2) Java Server Page; 3) Extensible Markup Language; 4) text; 5) Hypertext Markup Language; 6) Extensible Hypertext Markup Language; 7) JavaScript; and 8) Flash MX.

19.   The method of claim 17 wherein:

the properties file can specify at least one image.

20.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

the GUI is part of a portal on the World Wide Web.

21.   A method for rendering a graphical user interface (GUI), comprising:

accepting a request;

mapping the request to the set of controls that represent a GUI desktop, a GUI look and feel, and a GUI book, and wherein the controls are organized in a logical hierarchy;

traversing the representation, wherein the traversing comprises:

associating a theme with a first control in the set of controls;

rendering the first control according to the theme;

rendering any descendents of the first control according to the theme; and

wherein any descendents of the first control can override the theme.

22.   The method of claim 21 wherein:

the desktop is a view of a portal;

wherein the desktop can be represented by a desktop control; and

wherein the desktop control is hierarchically superior to the shell control and to the book control.

23.   The method of claim 21 wherein:

the look and feel determines the appearance of the portal;

wherein the look and feel can be represented by a look and feel control; and

wherein the theme is a variation of the look and feel.

24.   The method of claim 21 wherein:

the book can be used to navigate to at least one portal page; and

wherein the book is represented by a book control.

25.   The method of claim 21 wherein:

the request in a hypertext transfer protocol (HTTP) request.

26.   The method of claim 21 wherein:

the request originates from a Web browser.

27.   The method of claim 21, further comprising:

generating a response.

28.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

one of the set of controls can respond to an event raised by another of the set of controls.

29.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

a control can have an interchangeable persistence mechanism.

30.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

a control can have an interchangeable rendering mechanism.

31.   The method of claim 21 wherein:

a control can represent one of: button, text field, menu, table, window, window control, title bar, pop-up window, check-box button, radio button, window frame, desktop, shell, head, body, header, footer, book, page, layout, placeholder, portlet and toggle button.

32.   The method of claim 21 wherein:

associating a theme with the first control can occur when the first control is rendered.

33.   The method of claim 21 wherein:

the first control inherits the theme from a parent control.

34.   The method of claim 21 wherein:

the theme specifies the appearance and/or functioning of an control in the GUI.

35.   The method of claim 21 wherein:

rendering the first control according to the theme can be accomplished in parallel with rendering of other controls.

36.   The method of claim 21 wherein:

the theme can be specified in whole or in part by a properties file.

37.   The method of claim 36 wherein:

the properties file can include at least one of: 1) cascading style sheet; 2) Java Server Page; 3) Extensible Markup Language; 4) text; 5) Hypertext Markup Language; 6) Extensible Hypertext Markup Language; 7) JavaScript; and 8) Flash MX.

38.   The method of claim 36 wherein:

the properties file can specify at least one image.

39.   The method of claim 21 wherein:

the GUI is part of a portal on the World Wide Web.

40.   A method for rendering a graphical user interface (GUI), comprising:

providing for the representation of a GUI desktop, a GUI look and feel, and a GUI book as a plurality of controls wherein the controls are organized in a logical hierarchy;

traversing the representation, wherein the traversing comprises:

associating a first theme with a first control in the plurality of controls;

rendering the first control according to the first theme;

associating a second theme with a second control in the plurality of controls;

rendering the second control according to the second theme; and

wherein the second control is a descendant of the first control.

41.   The method of claim 40, further comprising:

accepting a request.

42.   The method of claim 40 wherein:

the desktop is a view of a portal;

wherein the desktop can be represented by a desktop control; and

wherein the desktop control is hierarchically superior to the shell control and to the book control.

43.   The method of claim 40 wherein:

the look and feel determines the appearance of the portal;

wherein the look and feel can be represented by a look and feel control; and

wherein the theme is a variation of the look and feel.

44.   The method of claim 40 wherein:

the book can be used to navigate to at least one portal page; and

wherein the book is represented by a book control.

45.   The method of claim 41 wherein:

the request in a hypertext transfer protocol (HTTP) request.

46.   The method of claim 41 wherein:

the request originates from a Web browser.

47.   The method of claim 40, further comprising:

generating a response.

48.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

the first control can respond to an event raised by the second control.

49.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

a control can have an interchangeable persistence mechanism.

50.   The method of claim 1 wherein:

a control can have an interchangeable rendering mechanism.

51.   The method of claim 40 wherein:

a control can represent one of: button, text field, menu, table, window, window control, title bar, pop-up window, check-box button, radio button, window frame, desktop, shell, head, body, header, footer, book, page, layout, placeholder, portlet and toggle button.

52.   The method of claim 40 wherein:

the first control inherits the first theme from a parent control.

53.   The method of claim 40 wherein:

the first theme specifies the appearance and/or functioning of the first control in the GUI.

54.   The method of claim 40 wherein:

the rendering the first control can be accomplished in parallel with the rendering of the second control.

55.   The method of claim 40 wherein:

a theme can be specified in whole or in part by a properties file.

56.   The method of claim 55 wherein:

the properties file can include at least one of: 1) cascading style sheet; 2) Java Server Page; 3) Extensible Markup Language; 4) text; 5) Hypertext Markup Language; 6) Extensible Hypertext Markup Language; 7) JavaScript; and 8) Flash MX.

57.   The method of claim 55 wherein:

the properties file can specify at least one image.

58.   The method of claim 40 wherein:

the GUI is part of a portal on the World Wide Web.

59.   A machine readable medium having instructions stored thereon that when executed by a processor cause a system to:

provide for the representation of GUI desktop, a GUI look and feel, and a GUI book as a set of controls wherein the controls are organized in a logical hierarchy;

traverse the representation, wherein the traversing comprises instructions to cause the system to:

associate theme with a first control in the set of controls;

render the first control according to the theme;

render any descendents of the first control according to the theme;

wherein any descendents of the first control can override the theme; and

wherein one of the set of controls can communicate with another of the set of controls.

60.   The machine readable medium of claim 59, further comprising:

accepting a request.

61.   The machine readable medium of claim 59 wherein:

the desktop is a view of a portal;

wherein the desktop can be represented by a desktop control; and

wherein the desktop control is hierarchically superior to the shell control and to the book control.

62.   The machine readable medium of claim 59 wherein:

the look and feel determines the appearance of the portal;

wherein the look and feel can be represented by a look and feel control; and

wherein the theme is a variation of the look and feel.

63.   The machine readable medium of claim 59 wherein:

the book can be used to navigate to at least one portal page; and

wherein the book is represented by a book control.

64.   The machine readable medium of claim 59 wherein:

one of the set of controls can respond to an event raised by another of the set of controls.

65.   The machine readable medium of claim 59 wherein:

a control can have an interchangeable persistence mechanism.

66.   The machine readable medium of claim 59 wherein:

a control can have an interchangeable rendering mechanism.

67.   The machine readable medium of claim 59, further comprising instructions that when executed cause the system to:

accept a request.

68.   The machine readable medium of claim 67 wherein:

the request in a hypertext transfer protocol (HTTP) request.

69.   The machine readable medium of claim 67 wherein:

the request originates from a Web browser.

70.   The machine readable medium of claim 59, further comprising instructions that when executed cause the system to:

generate a response.

71.   The machine readable medium of claim 59 wherein:

a control can represent one of: button, text field, menu, table, window, window control, title bar, pop-up window, check-box button, radio button, window frame, desktop, shell, head, body, header, footer, book, page, layout, placeholder, portlet and toggle button.

72.   The machine readable medium of claim 59 wherein:

associating the theme with the first control can occur when the first control is rendered.

73.   The machine readable medium of claim 59 wherein:

the first control inherits the theme from a parent control.

74.   The machine readable medium of claim 59 wherein:

the theme specifies the appearance and/or functioning of an control in the GUI.

75.   The machine readable medium of claim 59 wherein:

rendering the first control according to the theme can be accomplished in parallel with rendering of other controls.

76.   The machine readable medium of claim 59 wherein:

the theme can be specified in whole or in part by a properties file.

77.   The machine readable medium of claim 76 wherein:

the properties file can include at least one of: 1) cascading style sheet; 2) Java Server Page; 3) Extensible Markup Language; 4) text; 5) Hypertext Markup Language; 6) Extensible Hypertext Markup Language; 7) JavaScript; and 8) Flash MX.

78.   The machine readable medium of claim 76 wherein:

the properties file can specify at least one image.

79.   The machine readable medium of claim 59 wherein:

the GUI is part of a portal on the World Wide Web.

80.   A computer data signal embodied in a transmission medium, comprising:

a code segment including instructions to provide for the representation of GUI desktop, a GUI look and feel, and a GUI book as a set of controls wherein the controls are organized in a logical hierarchy;

a code segment including instructions to traverse the representation comprising:

a code segment including instructions to associate theme with a first control in the set of controls;

a code segment including instructions to render the first control according to the theme;

a code segment including instructions to render any descendents of the first control according to the theme;

wherein any descendents of the first control can override the theme; and

wherein one of the set of controls can communicate with another of the set of controls.